

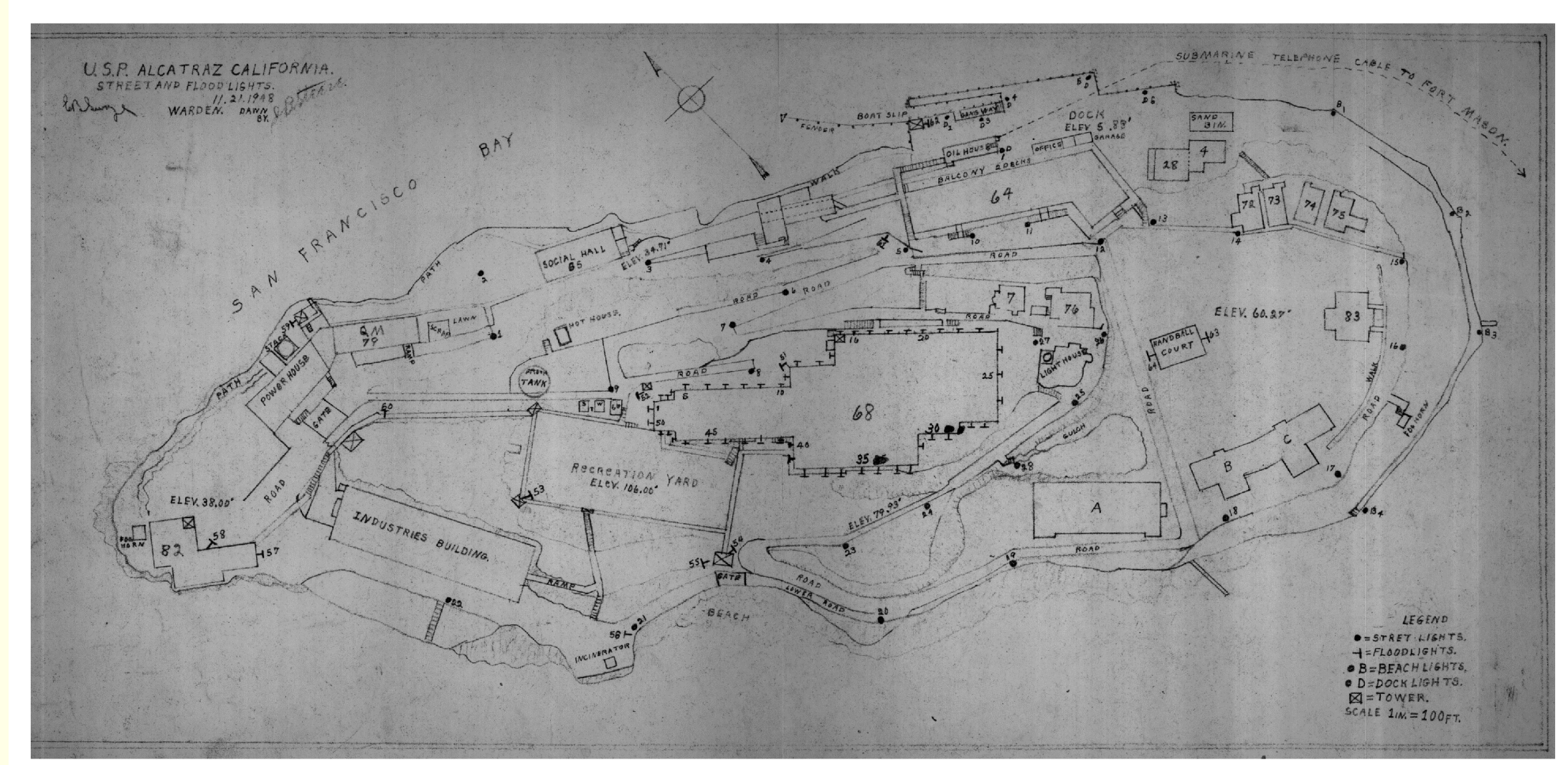
Prison Staff

From 1934 to 1963, the Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary housed some of the most notorious and hardened criminals in America. Many people are unaware of the *other* residents on the island: Federal Prison staff and their families, including children of all ages. As many as seventy families lived on the island at a time.

All families with children under 18 lived in either 64 Building (the old Army barracks near the dock) or in the 'B' and 'C' Buildings on the parade ground, which was surrounded by a ten-foot tall fence. Families without children or with children over 18 could live outside the fence in 'A' Building. The parade ground also featured a gym and a social hall for community events. Despite their notorious neighbors, many families led pleasant lives on The Rock.



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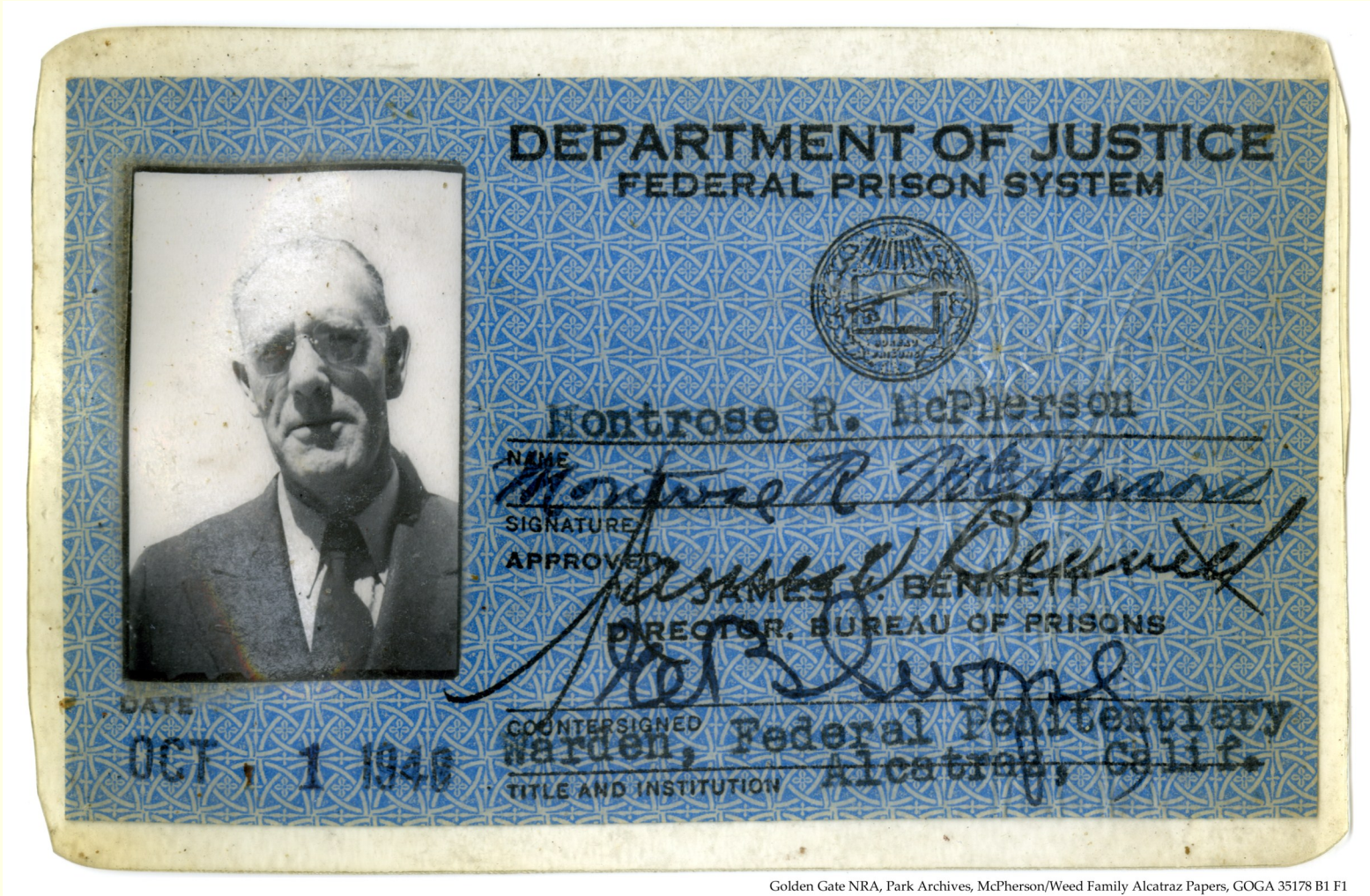
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Aerial view of Alcatraz Island circa 1942-1960. The Alcatraz plan notes the building numbers and functions. Most of the residents lived on the right side of the plan in 64 Building and on the parade ground in Buildings A, B, and C and Buildings 72-75.

Harold L. Henry, Correctional Officer on Alcatraz from the late 1930s until his death in 1961, lived with his wife, Irene, and their two children in an apartment in 64 Building near the dock. Irene Henry described Alcatraz as a “wonderful place for our children to play, without the hazards of traffic, [and] of the city.” Children rode the boat into San Francisco to attend school. She noted that “possibly, we are closer to our children, because our men work such odd hours, or are in such danger when they work, that women and children are glad to show their pleasure and gladness at having their husbands and fathers home safely.”

Montrose R. “Mac” McPherson, Correctional Officer on Alcatraz from 1942 to 1960, lived on the island with his wife, Mary, and step-daughter, Phyllis. The McPherson family first lived in 64 Building, and then moved to 'A' Building when Phyllis turned 18, where they paid \$15 a month in rent and had a view of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge. Mary was the Assistant Postmaster on the island.

The children’s view of life on the island was drastically different than that of the men confined behind bars. Phyllis McPherson noted that when she told people her address was Alcatraz they often asked, “Is there any place you can see over the wall?” She would simply reply, “What wall?”



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Left: Montrose R. “Mac” McPherson’s Bureau of Prisons identification card. McPherson performed various duties on Alcatraz including guard tower watch, painter, plumber, and carpenter. Right: Phyllis McPherson with her accordion behind the family’s apartment in 64 Building. In high school, Phyllis took accordion lessons in San Francisco’s North Beach district.



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